

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION

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1. LARGEST SWEDISH MORNING DAILY DAGENS NYHETER REPORTS IN PAGE ONE STORY JANUARY 7 THAT A NEAR-COLLISION OCCURRED BETWEEN US 707 RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT AND RUSSIAN COMMERCIAL FLIGHT IN AIR LANE OVER THE BALTIC NEAR GOTLAND JANUARY 5. INCIDENT HAS BEEN PROTESTED IN LETTER TO US EMBASSY, NOT YET RECEIVED EARLY JANUARY7, BY "LUFTFARTSVERKET", (SWEDISH AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL AGENCY), ACCORDING TO PAPER WHICH QUOTES "LUFTFARTSVERKET" SPOKESMAN AKE GUSTAFSSON EXTENSIVELY. PAPER ALSO REPORTS INCIDENT WAS LATEST OF THREE RECENTLY, WITH OTHER TWO BOTH HAPPENING LAST SEPTEMBER, ONE INVOLVING A JAPANESE CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT AND THE OTHER A FINNISH FLIGHT, THE LATTER OUTSIDE CONTROLLED AIRSPACE.

2. GUSTAFSSON IS QUOTED, PART: "SINCE WE DON'T KNOW FROM WHERE THE AMERICAN MILITARY PLANE -- OR PLANES -- COME, WE WROTE UNCLASSIFIED

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TO THE EMBASSY AND WE PRESUME THAT FROM THERE THE MATTER WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE CORRECT AUTHORITY."

3. PAPER ALSO REPORTS THAT PLANES WERE BOTH AT 10,000 METERS ALTITUDE AND CLOSED TO WITHIN 100 METERS. THE INCIDENT, DAGENS NYHETER NOTES, WAS REPORTED BY THE RUSSIAN PILOT TO THE AIR CONTROL CENTER AT STURUP,

SWEDEN.

4. PAPER COMMENTS EDITORIALLY:

A. "AMERICAN RECONNAISSANCE PLANES OF THE BOING 707 TYPE HAVE AS RECENTLY AS JANUARY 6, DN REPORTS TODAY, BEEN INVOLVED IN SUCH SERIOUS NEAR-ACCIDENTS WITH RUSSIAN, JAPANESE AND FINNISH CIVIL AIRCRAFT OVER THE BALTIC SEA THAT THE AIR TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT HAS WRITTEN TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY AND INSISTED ON ACTION FROM THE SAFETY VIEWPOINT."

B. "THAT IS GOOD AND WELL: IF SUCH A PLANE (CARRYING) SO MUCH ELECTRONIC ANTENNA EQUIPMENT THAT IT IS SOMETIMES COMPARED TO A HEDGEHOG IN FACT PASSED ONLY 100 METERS IN FRONT OF THE NOSE OF A SOVIET JET PLANE AND AT THE SAME HEIGHT, IT SEEMS MORE PROVOCATION THAN BAD LUCK. MOREOVER, NO PLANES AT ALL CAN GO INTO A REGULAR AIR ROUTE WITHOUT PERMISSION."

C. "BUT IT IS NOT ONLY A QUESTION FOR THE AIR TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT AND ABOUT FLYING SAFETY. IT IS OFTEN (A MATTER) FOR THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL. ONE CAN IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE TWO ALMOST-COLLIDED JETS ON THURSDAY REALLY HAD COLLIDED AND THE INVESTIGATIONS AFTERWARD SHOWED THAT THE AMERICAN PLANE HAD VIOLATED NOT ONLY THE AIR ROUTE RULES BUT ALSO SWEDISH AIRSPACE -- AND THAT IT HAD HAPPENED TIME AFTER TIME EARLIER WITHOUT KNOWN REACTION OTHER THAN AN OCCASIONAL ASCENT OF SWEDISH FIGHTER PLANES. STILL, IT IS NOT WITHOUT REASON THAT THE AMERICAN SPY PLANE GOES UNDER THE NAME STREETCAR, SO REGULAR ARE THE VISITS. SIMILAR UNCLASSIFIED

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RECONNAISANCE FLIGHTS OVER THE BALTIC, WITH VIOLATION NOW AND THEN OF SWEDISH AIR SPACE, OCCUR ALSO FROM THE EAST SIDE."

D. "SWEDEN HAS, NATURALLY, NO POSSIBILITY TO STOP THIS TRAFFIC OVER INTERNATIONAL WATERS WITH RADAR RECONNAISANCE DEEP INTO OUR OWN AND OTHER'S TERRITORY, AND WE ARE SAID TO TAKE PART IN IT OURSELVES."

E. "BUT IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT THE SWEDISH SIDE DOES NOT ACCEPT THAT VIOLATIONS OF SWEDISH AIR SPACE BECOME MORE OR LESS ACCEPTED ROUTINE. THE BIG POWERS ARE THEN ONLY TEMPTED TO MAKE ALL THE MORE IMPUDENT -- AND FROM THE RECONNAISSANCE VIEWPOINT PERHAPS WHOLLY UNNECESSARY -- APPROACHES TO SEE WHAT WE AND OUR AIR-PREPAREDNESS WILL PUT UP WITH."

F. "THE FOREIGNERS PRESUMABLY CAN SELDOM BE REACHED WITH FIGHTER PLANES. BUT THERE IS NO REASON NOT TO OPENLY PROTEST PROPERLY WITH DIPLOMATIC NOTES AND OTHER PRESSURES

EACH TIME IT HAPPENDS. THESE INCIDENTS NOW REPORTED, WHEN CIVILIAN AIR TRAFFIC HAS BEEN THREATENED BY VILLATIONS OF AIR ROUTES, ONLY MAKE REACTIONS ON THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT."

5. FURTHER COVERAGE AND COMMENT APPEARED ON POPULAR NATIONWIDE EKO MORNING RADIO NEWS PROGRAM EARLY JANUARY 7, INCLUDING AN INTERVIEW WITH GUSTAFSSON WHO SAID, PARAPHRASING, THAT IT IS NOT FORBIDDEN TO FLY IN THOSE AIR LANES BUT THAT IT IS CONSIDERED PROPER THAT MILITARY AIRCRAFT USING THESE SPACES SHALL OBSERVE THE RULES LADI DOWN IN THE CHICAGO CONVENTION TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE.
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